

ART IN THE PSYCHIATRIC REHABILITATION

What is art? What does art do?

Art is identity.

Through art:

We can learn who we are and where we have gone

We can tell others where we have been and where we are going

Arts are the signposts of life.

We can express and visualize our hopes through art.

We can relearn how to express our identity through art.

1. Art in our psychiatric rehabilitation programs has generally been limited to a couple of hours a day ³busy² crafts activities rather than the therapeutic thread through the entire program.
(Translated, we need more expressive arts and not less)

At this point let's reaffirm:

For mental health consumers, art is the opportunity to reestablish our identity. Art is also a natural part of humanity.

Finding a way to bring art expression to the recovery process should become a therapeutic priority, not something that is done when nothing seems to be going on.

2. The ability to communicate clearly can become diminished with the psychiatric condition. Even after the ³psychiatric crisis,² the ability to communicate clearly stays with the person who has a psychiatric condition, such as, the negative symptoms of schizophrenia.

Art can be an ideal form of communication.

3. Through art, we can also learn to understand better the stages of individual recovery. In the past, Art Therapy might have been used to diagnose the person. I am suggesting that we look at this from a point of how well the person is doing.

We can think in terms of understanding the person's present path of recovery.

For instance, I have seen some people express their past, which was full of many different psychiatric signposts, and have the artistic expressions of the past be perceived by the mental health practitioner....as present symptoms.

We can stay focused on recovery and not pathologies.

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4. Continual art expression through the mental health system might be of another use to the mental health consumer.

The reason for psychiatric intervention is that people with a psychiatric condition are seen as a danger to ourselves or others. Through art we might be able to express our ³innocence of malice² while our physical mannerisms exhibit jerky and frightening characteristics. The community will be able to better understand us and our psychiatric condition through art expression.

(Translated, we need more expressive arts and art exhibitions, not less)

Art in the hospital is the opportunity to reconnect each person with their identity through self expression. Hospital stays could be reduced.

Art expression has to be ongoing and encouraged as a natural part of human development. Through art expression, personal identity can be better strengthened and understood at the hospital or crisis period.

Is expressive therapy valued for the full range of recovery possibilities?
No

Should we find not only ways to value the therapeutic potential of expressive art but also discover new ways to explore the recovery potential through art expression?
Yes